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George Barton

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The Ex-Convict's Plunge
Herman Landon

An Enlarged Microbe
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Warren Judson Brier

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The Curse in a Dead Man's Eyes.*

BY GEORGE BARTON.

THAT one hot word fell like a lighted match on a heap of parched prairie grass. In a thrice two pairs of eyes were blazing with rage and two infuriated men went verbally, if not actually, at each other's throat.

The events leading up to and following this climax are as clear in my mind as if they happened yesterday. I was a cub stenographer and was detailed to work with Dwight Williams, the chief draughtsman of the C. B. & M. Railroad. He had two assistants and a large force of clerks under him. We were housed in a two story brick building just far enough away from the centre of population to perform our duties in peace and comfort.

Dwight Williams was one of the best draughtsmen the C. B. & M. ever had. He was a fair man; slow to anger, but if once aroused, he struck to kill and not to wound. He had two assistants, Jesse Clayton and Harry Smith, and if he could be said to have a preference, it was for Smith, who was tall and thin and uncommunicative. I came to know that, beneath his calm, unruffled exterior, Williams had a warm, generous heart. Also, he possessed little peculiarities which, to my mind, made him very human.

I can close my eyes now and see him moving about the office like a man in a trance. He constantly wore a long linen duster bespat-

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tered with ink. He was always sucking away at a long-stemmed corn-cob pipe. He said whimsically that it helped him to think. His office was in the second story front room of the building. Just outside the door, the hallway led to a circular staircase which ran to the floor where the clerks worked. I have seen him come down those stairs a thousand times, pipe in mouth, scraping his feet on the iron steps, and both hands filled with plans and blue prints.

One of his whims was his stationery. He used yellow note paper and yellow envelopes, both of which were embossed with his monogram. He used a stub pen, and wrote a thick, heavy hand which looked as if it had been produced with the end of a stick. That spreading handwriting on the yellow paper had a very fantastic effect. Again, there never could be any mistake about the presence of Williams. His room always reeked with the odor of the special brand of fine cut Turkish tobacco that he smoked in his corn-cob pipe.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of his connection with the company, the men presented him with a framed portrait of himself. It took him off his feet, but he managed to tell them how much he appreciated the spirit that prompted the gift. He was totally lacking in vanity, and if he had had any suspicion of what was coming, he probably would have peremptorily forbidden the whole business. Most certain of all, he would never have permitted a picture of himself. But he was very thoughtful of the feelings of others, and he accepted the tribute with an outward smile and an inward grimace. Truth to tell, it was an exceedingly faithful likeness. It hung on the wall facing his desk, and when he happened to be out of the room, the life-like portrait actually gave the impression that Williams was still there. The eyes of the picture seemed to follow one about the room.

The first rift in our happy family came with the advent of Jesse Clayton. Williams had met him at a drawing school and had brought him to the office as a great find. He said with some earnestness that Clayton had in him the making of a splendid draughtsman. It would be hard to imagine a greater contrast than was presented by the two men. Clayton was everything that Williams was not. He was a bundle of nerves. He was peevish and fault finding, and he had the faculty of taking the most commonplace word or action and giving it a significance that it never possessed. He was inclined to be superstitious, too, and said that he believed in re-incarnation. The boys said he went to fortune tellers and had his cards read. I don't know anything about that, but I do know that he was ex-

tremely jealous of Harry Smith, his fellow assistant draughtsman, and said openly that Smith was a pet of the chief draughtsman. Now, Smith was a whole-souled fellow who resembled Williams greatly, both in physique and disposition, and Clayton's snarls did not hurt him in the least. They proved to be only boomerangs.

But it soon became evident that Clayton was not after Smith. He was in reality looking with covetous eyes on the chair occupied by Dwight Williams. Everybody in the place realized this except Williams. He was so confident of his overshadowing ability that the thought of a possible rival never occurred to him. Unfortunately, at this stage of the game, Williams, for the first time in his life, began to develop careless habits. He became intimate with some convivial spirits, and late dinners on three or four occasions were followed by late appearances at the office. The climax came when the plans for one of the important extensions of the C. B. & M. were not ready for presentation at the regular meeting of the Board of Directors. That, in itself, was not a "killing matter," as one of the directors had said, but Williams came in for rather a spirited rebuke from the general superintendent.

The chief draughtsman would probably have taken this in good part if he had not received a hint that Clayton was responsible for the rebuke. He was furious. The idea that his subordinate should spy on him and go out of his way to report him was intolerable. Williams was an autocrat in his way, and his first impulse was to demand Clayton's head as the price of his own continuance in the service. But sober thought intervened, and he realized that it would be a mistake to act until he was certain of his ground. In the meantime, Clayton was slowly but surely undermining his superior. He did it in a dozen little ways. He always contrived that when Williams dropped a peg he should go up a notch in the estimation of the general superintendent. Williams, in a sub-conscious sort of way, seemed to realize his position. He grew morose. He dissipated more and more at night. Once or twice he referred to the subject while he was dictating to me.

"French," he said, "I attend to my work, don't I?"

"You certainly do," I replied, honestly enough.

"I'm sure I do. I've been guilty of a few lapses but what's that compared to twenty-five years of faithful service? I realize that someone is after my scalp, but I can never tell where the next shot is coming from. How can a fellow defend himself in the dark?"

"Oh," I said soothingly, "I think you're exaggerating the importance of this business."

"Not at all," he retorted dismally. "I have a premonition that the end is not far off. And if anything happens to me I want Harry Smith to take my place."

The crisis came sooner than any of us expected. One day the chief draughtsman did not reach the office until noon. He said he had been sick. He certainly was shaky. Coming out of his room unexpectedly, he found Clayton at the telephone talking to the general superintendent. Williams was livid with rage.

"You traitor!" he shouted.

"If you say that again," hurled back Clayton, "I'll kill you."

Williams was about to retort when he remembered Clayton's view on re-incarnation.

"The night after I'm buried," he cried, his face wrinkled with passion, "I'll come back in the form of a bloodhound. I'll scratch at your door, and when you open it, I'll spring at your throat and choke you to death."

Clayton shivered, and his face turned a greenish color. But he came back in a gust of passion:

"I'll see that you get what you deserve," he shouted, "the superintendent shall know the truth about this place."

In another moment they would have come to blows, but curious to state, they recovered their senses simultaneously. Williams hurried to his room. He called to the office boy. A few minutes later he came out.

"Boys," he said, with a wave of his hand, "I'm going home. I don't feel well."

Before dusk he had notice of his dismissal from the service. The next day he died. Some say it was apoplexy. Others, more sentimentally inclined, said that it was from a broken heart. His funeral was a perfect jam. He was one of those men who seemed more popular in death than in life. All of the clerks from the office were there. Clayton sent a floral offering and attended the obsequies. He was even seen to weep—not bitterly, but respectfully. Also, he observed regretfully, that Williams was his own worst enemy.

On the evening of the funeral, Clayton appeared at the office bubbling over with business. He called me to one side.

"I've been appointed chief draughtsman," he said, "and I'd like you to help me get rid of these letters. We may have to work late."

He must have noticed the look of disappointment in my face, for he added:

"I suppose me of the boys around here won't like it. Well, I'll tell you right now that there's going to be a shaking of dry bones."

I made no comment, but followed him into the private office. He seated himself in the revolving chair in front of the roll-top desk as if he belonged there. The act jarred on my sensibilities. To me, that chair belonged to Dwight Williams. I know it was a foolish notion, but the way in which Clayton flopped into it seemed little short of sacrilege. The new chief draughtsman aroused me from my meditations.

"There's a lot of dead wood about this place," he said, in his dry, rasping voice, "and I'm going to clear it out."

"Yes," I replied, for want of something better to say.

"Yes," he repeated, volcanically, then suddenly began to sniff.

"What's that funny smell?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

I knew well enough. It was the odor of the Turkish tobacco that Dwight Williams smoked in his corn-cob pipe. It is very strong, and when it gets in the carpets and hangings, the odor lasts a long while.

"I think this place needs a complete house-cleaning," said Clayton, swinging back in the chair and looking at me in an insolent style, "and the only thing that bothers me is which end to begin with."

"Perhaps," I ventured, "my resignation—"

"No, no," he interrupted, "you're all right. I need you. But that fellow Smith. He's incompetent. And Bob out there. That boy's too fresh. And there are several of the clerks. You know as well as I do, French, that Dwight Williams never had any business in a job like this. He was too easy. Why, look at this room—"

He stopped short.

His eyes met the portrait of Williams on the side of the wall. It seemed to be frowning down on him in stern disapproval. Clayton arose from the chair and began to pace the floor.

"Why, look at the condition of this room. I—"

Again he halted. The eyes of Dwight Williams appeared to be following him wherever he went. It was an illusion, of course, but it disconcerted him just the same. He resumed his chair and turned to me impatiently.

"Come, let's get to work on these letters."

He pulled the morning's mail toward him. I drew my chair closer, put my open note-book on my knee and waited, sharpened pencil poised in the air, for the dictation. But Clayton had not even opened any of the letters. He was gazing at the pile of correspondence with an awe-stricken air. His face turned waxen, and little beads of perspiration came out on his forehead. His eyes looked

as if they would pop from his head. I followed his glance. What I saw gave me an ugly start.

The top letter on the heap of mail was in a yellow envelope, and had on it the monogram of Dwight Williams. It was addressed to Jesse Clayton in the handwriting of the late chief draughtsman. No wonder Clayton sat there nervously drumming on the arms of his chair and staring at the strange thing with the eyes of an imbecile.

Finally he thrust it aside as one would push a snake or a poisonous adder. He opened the other letters and dictated the commonplace replies which they called for. But he was greatly upset. His hand trembled, and his voice trembled. All the time he was at work he kept his eye on the yellow envelope. It seemed to fascinate him. Presently, when everything else was finished, he slowly picked it up. He noted from the postmark that it had come through the regular mail. He slipped the little steel blade through the flap of the envelope. Very slowly, and with hand shaking like a leaf in the breeze, he pulled out the letter. It was written on yellow paper in the bold, heavy penmanship of Dwight Williams. Instinctively I looked over his shoulder. This is what I read:

> "The moment you get this letter I want you to quit this office—and quit it forever. If you fail to do as I say, you'll regret it to the day of your death a—and afterward."

I saw the yellow sheet go fluttering to the floor. It had slipped from Clayton's nerveless fingers. His head dropped against the back of his chair. I thought he had fainted, but the next moment his eyes opened, and he glared at me with a look of fear such as I had never seen in a human being before—it was shocking, it was appalling, it was terrifying. He tried to speak but could not articulate. He rose slowly and staggered across the room, like a drunken man. He clutched at his collar as if he would tear it off.

"I—I feel faint," he murmured presently in broken tones, "I—I must have some air."

I was at his heels. I opened the door leading to the hallway and he groped his way out. A gust of wind from a friendly window revived him. He gave a moan, a sigh of relief like a sick man recovering consciousness. Presently he returned to his room. He spoke rather briskly:

"Come," he said, "we've got to get through with this work."

Just then the storm which had been impending all afternoon, broke. The rain came down in torrents, and the wind howled in the

most dismal manner. The dictation was about to start when we were both startled by a new sound. It was like the moan or the baying of a bloodhound. Clayton stopped short, holding a telegram in his hand. It was a wire offering him a position in Texas. He had begun the formula of declination when the queer sound arrested him. For several moments he sat there like a man turned to stone.

Presently a new noise was heard. It was like a dog scratching the doors with its claws.

I made a move toward the door.

"Scratch! Scratch!! Scratch!!" it came, followed by a terrifying baying.

"Stop," he cried, hoarsely, "don't open that!"

He was on his feet now, rushing across the room like a man deranged.

"Answer that telegram," he wailed in a voice curiously unlike his own, "and say I'll take that place in Texas."

I wrote down the message, but when I looked up Clayton had gone. Harry Smith came in at that moment, and the two of us opened the back door. We found the fury of the storm had almost uprooted a big oak tree. One big section drooped against the side of the house. And with every fresh gust of wind through the leaves there was a sobbing like the baying of a bloodhound. Simultaneously, the bare branches swept the panels of the door like the scratching of a dog's claws.

Harry Smith was appointed chief draughtsman. The morning he took charge I discovered Bob, the office boy, in the outer room, looking very disconsolate.

"What's the matter, Bob?" I asked sympathetically.

He rubbed a dirty fist against a tear-stained eye.

"Promise not to tell," he blubbered; and I promised.

"The day Mr. Williams died," he said, "he gave me a letter to give Mr. Clayton. I couldn't find him right away. I stuck the letter in my pocket and forgot all about it. I only thought of it the next day. I was afraid to tell about it, so I put a stamp on it and mailed it. Do you think he got it all right?"

I smiled. "Yes," I said, "he got it all right."

Wanted — A Rejuvenator.*

BY L. GRACE SITZER.

ERSONAL—a business man of forty-five has recently had a bereavement that depresses his spirits and makes office routine most difficult. His physician insists upon a complete change.

What young man, enthusiastic, a lover of sports and the drama wishes to undertake the "Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary's brother?"

"Jones" foots the bills; requisites are refinement, personality, and temperament. Please state qualifications and age.

K 238 Tribune.

The Gloom-man sat in his ornate library glaring into space. The soft-footed servant brought him a card on a tiny lacquered tray. "Bub Davis," it read, "the answer to your AD."

He turned to view a saucy, boyish, tailored girl.

Bub seated herself. "I'm Dad's boy, and you'll never know me from the real thing if you take me on,—'Baseball enthusiast, happy temperament, willing to rejuvenate, etc.,' 'Jones foots the bills,' is what won me."

As the man sat silently eyeing her she glanced about with interest. "Where's Aunt Mary, should I transact the business with her?"

The Gloom-man roused. "That's the trouble, she inserted the advertisement in a moment of inspiration, then received a telegram from home saying Bobby was down with the mumps, and away she sped, telling me to be sure to select the right applicant. Molly always was the kind of a sister to get a fellow into a mess."

Bub brightened. "Never mind, your decision is what counts, let's proceed. I read the advertisement and went down to the Tribune office bright and early to await developments. I waited until I heard your man inquire for mail for 'K 238,' and followed him here. Personal interview always desirable.

'If you like-a me and I like-a you,
And we both like about the same,'

she hummed, "the question before the house is, are you respectable?

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I'm in for a good, decent time, diversion if you please. Dad's away for three months. He said I could do anything respectable, if I'd keep out of debt and not marry.

"Could you make it a hundred a month? the salary I mean. Dad said I never could earn that much. Could you make it a three months' engagement? Would you for the sake of respectability call for me and take me home each day?"

As the man was still silent she beamed persuasively, "Am I the rejuvenator?"

"You interest me," declared the Gloom-man, "and I'm respectable I hope. Yes, I'll meet your terms. It is your due to state that what ails me is, I was engaged to be married to the sweetest woman on earth, so I thought; she eloped with her chauffeur. I'm broken, nothing interests me." He added savagely, "You'll hate me for it for it's weak."

"No," she answered softly, "I like you because you care. Don't get cold feet, I couldn't marry you if I would. Let's go see the ball game. I want to see the Cubs win. Oh, I say, we'll play golf and tennis. If we don't have to count the coin we can have the time of our lives. I'm going home, call for me soon."

He followed her to the library door and she turned as she passed through it. "I'm sorry about my slang if you care. Dad says no one would guess the money he's spent on my college polish. Say, when I have on an evening gown you can't guess what a polished lady I become. I'm going to call you Cousin Gloom. He's a cousin of mine," she trolled.

The Gloom-man caught her hand. "You are good for the dumps."

She quickly discarded his hand. "None of the clasp stuff, just a good time. Give me twenty minutes, then hump."

The ball game was over. Bub had proved a good Fan. As they entered his automobile she quietly took the wheel.

"Bub," exclaimed the Gloom-man, almost with enthusiasm, "let's don our evening clothes and dine at the Bismarck Garden?"

For a moment she seemed embarrassed, then grinned. "Rats, it's a cinch. I'm hired by the day. We'll go."

They were waiting for the ordered dinner to be served, the glittering lights, the bewitching music, and the buzzing voices, enveloped them. Bub was demure, transformed; the Gloom-man could not account for the change.

Bub, do you believe in dual personality? I believe between the two of you I will rejuvenate." And the man almost smiled.

"No," she replied, "not dual, just different." With a merry laugh

of bewitchment she rippled, "I am sure it sounds crude but I even think differently when in an evening gown."

Two months had passed, every fiber of his being was atune to life. They were returning from the golf links, and Bub at the wheel was apace with the speed law.

"Stop Bub, let's enjoy the sunset."

"Ah, chuck it, I'm afraid it's the clasp stuff. But here goes, I'm leased you know."

She halted the car near a spreading elm. He deposited a hamper on the ground. The girl's eyes flashed pleasure as they lighted upon it, for she had been ignorant of its presence in the car.

"Bully for you Cousin Gloom, take it all back about being leased; the pleasure is all mine." The man smiled.

The healthy appetites, the appetizing food, the balmy, radiant sunset air made the feast a merry one. They lingered on the slope of the hill "to see the sun to bed," Bub said.

The Gloom-man as they turned drew a slip of paper from his pocket. "Bub, there is my check for three hundred dollars; it's two months instead of three, but you have earned it royally. I wish to release you hoping we may resume on a different footing."

Bub looked perplexed and uncomfortable. "I know you are all to the good, but I can't take all of it. I haven't earned it, it's the amount I named, and it makes me feel like a lemon."

"You must keep it Bub; your services were invaluable. I have better poise than I ever before possessed. I feared mental unbalance, but you badgered and coaxed me back to normal, and I'll never lose it again. If my love could lease you for life I should be happy. Why couldn't you marry me if you would?"

"Father would object," she roguishly replied.

"But if your father released you from your promise to him?" he persisted.

"Cousin Gloom, which of my two do you like best, evening gown or this?" pointing to her golf costume.

"Bub, I think if I had to choose I would say the lassie of the evening gown. But I can't be sure. Why?"

"Say, Cousin Gloom, the shadows are chasing this way, we'll spin toward home, and on the way I'll tell you why I think I couldn't if I would."

They reached the park. Bub brought the car to a stand-still under an arc light and jerked off her cap. "This is why." She removed a wig and laughed. "Don't take it too hard, old man."

The Gloom-man choked. "A boy!"

"Buck up old chap," said Bub, as the wig and cap were replaced.

The car paused at Bub's door. "Come in Cousin Gloom and we'll have it out. You must forgive me for I did it for a lark and didn't think you'd get to care that way."

The man objected but Bub drew him inside, pushed him into the parlor and switched on the lights. There sat Bub in an evening gown. He looked from one to the other.

"Twins," chuckled the golf clothes Bub. "Tell it to her; she could if she would, and she's spoons on you, she said so."

And they were alone.

The Heart of the Indian.*

BY MAUD MOSHER.

ISS BROWN, your class of little redskins has been disorderly on the stairs twice in succession. I realize that you do not approve of such methods but I think if you would use a good, old-fashioned slipper, such as mother used to wear, on those little Indian angels of yours it would do them a vast amount of good and promote the cause of civilization immensely and immediately."

If it had been the class she had taught last year Miss Brown would not have been surprised at almost anything but these little second graders had always been such good, obedient pupils that it was unbelievable that they could be persistently naughty. An Indian girl in the music room, near by, was faithfully practising a strain over and over and, to Miss Brown, the words kept singing themselves,

> The strong carpet slipper mother handled so well—
> The old-fashioned slipper, the big, broad-soled slipper.

"If the children only understood enough English," she thought, "so that I could talk to them freely and they could understand easily, maybe I could get into their hearts. If I could only see with their eyes perhaps this civilizing business wouldn't be so much like groping in the dark. I just can't use a slipper, as Mr. Willis suggests, or punish them until I know that they mean to do wrong. I'll talk to them to-morrow and see what I can learn. Indian angels is a good name, they have been so good all this term, bless their hearts!"

The Kansas summer had been a long, hot, dry one, and the new pupils who had entered in May from the desert reservations of Arizona had not felt the change of climate until the cold, windy days of the late fall came. This was the first snow of the season. The fairy, white flakes floated in the air and then sank like a light, lacey cloud over the green grass and the graceful limbs of the elm

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trees, where the last leaves trembled in the blasts of the prairie winds.

Many of the Arizona Apaches had never seen snow before. To them it was the most wonderful thing in the universe—this soft, white world, this noiseless, cold, shivery world. Miss Brown had noticed that, for several days, little Louie, one of the desert Apaches, had seemed to shrink from the biting wind as though it were almost more than he could endure. Like the brave Indian laddie that he was he had said nothing to her but the small brown face turned pale and gray as the sound of the wind rang through the hall-way, that morning, as the pupils stood in line waiting for dismissal.

Miss Brown stooped over the little fellow as she drew his uniform coat closely, buttoned it and turned up the collar. The Small Boys Quarters were so near that it was not considered necessary for the boys to wear their overcoats to school, except in the most severe weather of winter. The older boys did not mind the cold so much, as many of them were from the tribes further north but the little boys, especially those from the desert tribes, felt it keenly, at the beginning of winter.

Just before dismissal time she had asked, "What were you little boys doing, yesterday and the day before, on the stairs, that you were told to stand there until all the other classes marched out of the schoolhouse?"

As there was no answer she had asked, "Why were you told to stay on the stairs, yesterday?" thinking that perhaps they had not understood the first and longer question.

No one had volunteered to answer but after a moment of silence she had noticed that Jamie Lone Wolf, a Sioux, and Ralph Standing Bear, a Pawnee, had exchanged sly glances without lifting their heads.

"Ralph, were you the boy who was naughty?"

"No'm."

"Do you know who it was?"

"Yes'm."

"Who was the boy, Ralph?"

No answer, just a sudden tightening of the lips, as the dark eyes looked straight and unseeingly ahead. Miss Brown did not ask again as she detested, herself, the spirit that would "tell."

"Jamie, were you the disorderly boy?"

"No'm."

"Why did all of you boys stand on the stairs when it was your turn to march out?"

"Man what stand in big hall told us to stand on stairs till all big boys march out schoolhouse."

"Children, the man who stands in the big hall is the principal teacher. That means the same as the big chief teacher and this man's name is Mr. Willis. When you speak of him you should always call him by his name."

It seemed to be impossible to learn anything more satisfactory so Miss Brown dismissed the class, cautioning them to be good children. The little girls marched out first with the proud, virtuous air that said more plainly than words, "Naughty boys, why don't you be good like the girls?"

This had been just a few minutes ago and now the class were behaving so badly that they had been punished again and for the third time—just the boys, the little girls had been allowed to go. The teacher could not understand it. In this class there had been such a sweet, kindly spirit. It was seldom that she had found it necessary to do more than point out to them the difference between right and wrong. Thinking it over she decided that the boys must have gotten into mischief either while she was buttoning Louie's coat or just as she had stepped back into the schoolroom.

* * * * * * *

The air was as soft and balmy on Monday morning as though winter, cold wind and snow were of another clime. The Arizona pupils shivered no longer with the slightest draft and did not tremble listening to the shrieking wind of the week before.

Miss Brown spoke to her class very seriously on Monday morning, when school opened, concerning their conduct of the week before, urging upon them the thought that if self pride did not prevent misconduct regard for the comfort of other members of the class should be sufficient. "Some of you little boys are doing wrong things, at dismissal time, and so all of the little boys in the class are being punished by being told to remain on the stairs, instead of marching out in their turn. When you have to stand like this the whole school knows that you have done wrong. You must all try to do good to each other, help each other every way you can and never do wrong to one another in any way. You must want to help each other, in your hearts, then you will be good."

Some of the earnest brown faces looked sadly puzzled but Miss Brown felt sure her words had made the proper impression for all that week the little fellows were as good as gold. It really seemed as though they tried harder than ever before to do just right in

everything. Not once did she have to send a boy home to his dormitory to wash his hands again, or to put on a clean collar or to get a new pair of shoe laces. The kite flying season was over, she reflected thankfully, so the boys' shoes would remain laced, probably, until next spring when again, according to invariable custom, they would rob the shoes of their strong black laces in order to make the strings and tails for their kites.

The warm days that had followed the snow were out of season and on Friday the wind began to moan again, rising higher and higher into the piercing shriek of the week before. It seemed as though the stone schoolhouse shook as the blasts struck it in their fury.

Louie was such a darling! His eyes and hair were black, his lashes were long, heavy and black. His baby face was round and dark—brown like the complexions of all of the Indians who live in the hot, sandy deserts of the Arizona lands. His expression was serious, his disposition so lovable and he was such a conscientious little worker that he was a favorite generally. He was one of the youngest pupils in the school, was really scarcely advanced enough to belong to the second grade, and so came in for his share of the love that was lavished on the school babies by the older pupils.

Miss Brown had felt somewhat worried about the child lately and had asked him several times if he were ill but he had always answered, in his serious way, "I not sick, I feel all right," with a little halt between each difficult English word. He had felt the change when the first chill days of fall came and often when the pupils were working at the blackboards he would sink into a seat, nearby. If the teacher asked him what was the matter he would reply, "Sit down, rest, one minute. That all."

Unfortunately there had been several deaths in the school hospital the year before and some of the children had grown very much afraid to say that they were sick. One day she had said, "Louie, I am afraid you are sick—" but he burst into sobs as he cried, "I not sick. Not like doctor. 'Fraid hospital, all boys die go hospital!"

Miss Brown had soothed him and had promised she would not speak to the dreaded doctor, as the child protested that he was not ill, but it did seem unusual that he should want to sit down so much instead of playing as would seem natural.

John Yellow Bear was a northern Cheyenne, tall, slender, proud and self-possessed, as his tribesmen usually are. His name was almost invariably on the honor roll of the school. Miss Brown could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw him watch the prin-

cipal's signals, on Friday noon, and then, as Mr. Willis turned his face toward the second grade, deliberately reach forward, take hold of the collar and shake Ira Has-a-knife who stood just below him on the stairs.

She was not more astonished at John's action than she was that Ira did not strike back instantly, as he was a quick tempered boy who struck first and thought afterward. Not another boy moved or took any notice of the affair nor did they show any resentment although the principal was very harsh in his reprimand to the whole class of boys. It almost seemed as though John had intended and wished that Mr. Willis see him although one glance at his face showed no indication of bravado. Rather one might think he were engaged in some duty of an unpleasant nature; he wore a sort of "it hurts me more than it does you" expression.

Miss Brown did not see John again until Monday when she took him to another room that she might talk privately with him and learn, if possible, why he had acted as he had on the Friday before.

"I wish you would tell me, Johnnie dear, why you misbehaved in the ranks last Friday."

"I not can tell you, Miss Brown."

"Please tell me, dear, why did you shake Ira? Did he do something to you first?"

In quick surprise the boy looked up. "No'm, he didn't do nothin'."

"Then why did you treat him so badly?"

"I got to do it, Miss Brown."

"Why did you have to do it?"

John's black eyes looked straight into Miss Brown's as he said, "'Cause all second reader boys got to do bad things sometimes."

"What do you mean, dearie? Tell me so that I will understand."

"Boys got to do bad things sometimes, on stairs, teacher."

"Do you mean that you cannot help being naughty sometimes, John?"

"No'm, I means we got to do it, bad things—all boys in second reader class." Miss Brown could not understand what he was attempting to express. It was such an easy matter for the Indian child, with his limited English vocabulary, to be misunderstood and so very difficult for him to express himself properly.

"John, I want you to promise me that you will be a good boy, after this, on the stairs. Will you promise that, dear?"

"No'm."

"Why not, child? I'm afraid that I'll have to punish you if you will not promise because you must be good, you know."

Silently the boy stood by his teacher's side, for one minute, then for another and another. Lifting his solemn black eyes to hers he said, "You one big woman. Me one little Indian boy. You make me promise with my mouth but me no promise with my heart. You no can make me promise with my heart, so my mouth have to tell lies or else you punish me. I think that not right 'cause you say always must be good to boys littler than you are."

"Why can't you make the promise with your heart also, John?"

" 'Cause like I tell you, all boys in second grade have to be bad sometimes on stairs. I not be bad for long time now but by and by I bees bad 'nother time. Then," with a sigh, "I not be bad, maybe, long time again, then once—twice maybe, till summer comes. All boys have to be bad in cold days, except—" the boy hesitated, startled, as though he felt that he had said too much.

"Except who, John?"

"Can't tell, teacher."

"I do not understand, very well, just what you are trying to tell me, dear, so I wish you would think it over and then make me the promise with your heart. You may go back to the schoolroom now."

When little Na-ta-chee, that day, pulled the ear of the boy who stood in front of him on the stairs and the next day the little fellow whose place was just behind Na-ta-chee pulled his hair, it began to look to Miss Brown as though there were method in the disorder, as each boy had been naughty according to his place in the ranks.

"In the depths of your romantic, womanly heart, Miss Brown," said Mr. Willis, that evening, "you are convinced that the boys do not intend to be naughty, that they have some motive that we do not understand. In the depths of my knowledge of bad-boy nature, obtained strictly at first-hand, I believe that they are simply trying to find out how much their much fool white teachers will stand for. I'm going to give them a talking to that will stand out in their memories for some little time to come, the very next time they misbehave themselves. I am also going to make them stand in ranks on the stairs for a week, at the next offence, two weeks at the next and so on."

The next day Mr. Willis gave the boys the promised "talking to" and as they stood in ranks for the week the trouble seemed to be over. Absolutely silent they stood in their places, caps held against their breasts, heads erect and eyes straight in front. When the week was ended Miss Brown trembled a little for their good conduct but she had no occasion to fear for the day ended, the ranks

marched out and all was calm and serene in the second grade.

As she passed the Small Boys' Quarters, that evening, after school, she heard her name called. "Miss Brown, Miss Brown, come here a minute. Do you want to see what your little folks are doing now? Come this way and look through the window." Miss Boleau led the way through the hall and down the stairs to the mending room, Miss Brown following. The windows of the mending room looked out on an open court. Almost directly opposite were the windows of the playroom.

Seated in a circle, on the floor, were eight of the little second graders. Ira Has-a-knife was addressing the other boys. He held a slip of paper in his hand as he spoke, to which he pointed with emphatic gesture. Suddenly he leaned forward, shaking the paper almost in the face of the half Spanish boy, Juan Espinosa.

The eight little boys sat in silence for a moment, then Ralph rose. He took the paper from Ira. Thrusting it before Juan he apparently asked a question. Juan answered, and at the words Ira threw out his hand with the characteristic gesture of the Indian, pointing with contempt and derision to the one who seemed to be the center of the discussion, then with a wild, free motion, stretched out his right hand with forefinger extended towards the southwest.

"What are they doing? What can they mean, Miss Boleau?"

Miss Boleau was an Indian girl, trained in one of the government schools, now the matron of the small boys. "They are holding a council, just as they have seen their fathers do when some member of the tribe did something wrong. Evidently Juan has done something that he ought not to do and they are holding a council about him. It is just like the real thing although only play and I thought you might like to see them.

"I sometimes think that what my grandfather said was right. In those days there were very few Indian schools and consequently only one or two persons in our tribe had ever been away to school, so the people of our camp thought it very strange, indeed, for me to want to be educated."

"And your grandfather said—"

"Grandfather was very old and Indian children are taught to listen closely, when the aged speak. I remember just how his voice sounded as he said, 'You may send the child of the forest to school, she may learn the ways of the white man, she may live as the white man lives, she may forget the ways of the Indian, she may forget her own people but the heart is the heart of the Indian—that you can never tame.'

"When the grass is springing just after the snow, when the wild flowers are blooming, when the first soft winds are blowing, when the first songs of the wild birds bring back the memory of the white teepees in the forest I feel that grandfather understood—the heart is the heart of the Indian.

"Sometimes when the band plays the wild Indian music I can scarcely keep myself from crying the long cry, the squaws' war cry, the cry the women of the camp gave when the warriors left for the war path. But even in the wild thought of the moment the horror of it all comes over me—the long days of watching and starving and misery and pain for the Indian, the horrible days and nights of terror and torture and bloodshed for the whites. Then I know that gandfather was wrong—the heart of the Indian, my heart, is tamed. My dear little boys, their hearts will tame too, just give them time to learn! What are they doing now?"

The little boys had risen and were marching Indian file, four of them, then Juan, then the three others. Out of the playroom, through the basement and out to the playgrounds. "They've finished their council—little old men."

* * * * * * *

Slender icicles were forming in the tiny cascade of the brook, as Miss Brown paused, for a moment, on her after-school walk. The sun was just setting in a glory of crimson and gold, the wind rising forced her to hasten her steps toward the group of old oak trees, at the end of the meadow path, which was always a favorite resting place in the summer days.

As she came nearer "Ki-yi-yi-yi! Ki-yi-yi-yi!" came the chilling, shivery, blood-curdling Indian cry. "Ki-yi-yi-yi!" For a moment Miss Brown almost thought she was back in the Sioux country, where she had first trembled at the terrible, shrieking sound, back in the lonely schoolhouse on the Standing Rock Reserve. "Ki-yi-yi-yi! Ki-yi-yi-yi!" Children voices and through the cry a sobbing, "Let me go! Let me go!"

"Ki-yi-yi-yi! Ki-yi-yi-yi!" "Let me go. Let me go." The voices mingled in the savage Indian cry and the pleading accents of a terrified child. Faster and faster Miss Brown's running feet touched the frozen snow. "What can they be doing? Little savages, what are they doing?" she whispered to herself.

"Ki-yi-yi-yi! Ki-yi-yi-yi!" "I keep promise. Let me go, let me go. I keep promise." The voice rising to a scream broke and was heard no more. Would she never reach the shielding oak trees? Miss Brown checked the frightened sob that rose in her throat.

"Yee! y—e—e, ki-yi-yi-yi! Ki-yi-yi-yi!" Just a few steps more and the war song ended in a startled "O—h!" and Jamie Lone Wolf found himself dancing and singing alone while the teacher held in either hand a would-be warrior, in a grasp learned years before in a country school.

Her little second graders! Kind, sweet-tempered, gentle mannered little second reader boys! Tied to the tree, round which they had been dancing, was the half-Indian, half-Spanish boy, Juan, face ashen, tears streaming, eyes full of terror, slender body trembling.

For a moment it seemed as though an icy hand clutched at her heart, then Miss Brown threw off the fright and terror of the moments before. "Untie that rope, instantly. Abraham, take your knife and cut the knots. Now boys, march, single file, straight back to the schoolhouse. Do not speak to each other and while you are going make up your minds that you are going to answer every question I ask you." Miss Brown's voice was stern as she stooped to wipe the tears from Juan's dirty little face.

Back they marched through the winter twilight, those little Indian warriors—Abraham, Jamie, Ralph, Ira, John, Na-ta-chee and Wacautomanie, Miss Brown and Juan bringing up the rear, through the school grounds, past the dining room where the other children were just marching in to supper, over to the schoolhouse and up to the second grade room. Miss Brown turned on the lights, then lined up the boys in front of her. "Now boys, explain all about this matter."

No one volunteered to answer.

"Ira, why did you boys tie Juan to the tree?"

"Miss Brown, teacher, he make to all boys a promise, then he *not* do it."

"What was the promise?"

"One boy cannot tell, all boys must tell or one boy must not tell."

"Juan, what was the promise that you made and did not keep?"

Juan's sobs, as he hid his face in his hands, were the only answer.

To one after another, over and over, again and again, did Miss Brown ask her questions and try to get some information about what was such an unheard-of thing to have happened in that school. She might as well have asked the oak trees down by the meadow path. There was only one reply, "One boy cannot tell, all boys must tell but one boy must not tell."

Finally she said, "Tomorrow you will come to school. You will sit in your places but you may not study, you may not speak, you

may not read or write, you may not play with the beads or paint, you may not look at the picture books. My eyes will know you are here but my heart will not see you and my heart will never see you again until you tell me all about this strange, strange, wild thing that you have done. Now you may go."

For three days the little boys filed into their seats. All morning they sat with folded hands. To Miss Brown's repeated questions there was only the one answer—"One boy cannot tell—"

The morning after the war dance little Louie, the Apache, was reported ill. As soon as school was over Miss Brown went to the school hospital to see him—inflammatory rheumatism, the nurse said and likely to be a long attack, although the doctor had no reason to believe that it would be specially serious.

Every day Miss Brown went to see her class baby. On the third day, as she leaned over the bed, stroking his straight, black hair, he whispered, "Miss Brown, I come hospital now, I think I die. All boys die come hospital. Long time my arm sick but I 'fraid hospital so I not tell you or matron."

"Louie dear, you came to the hospital so that the nurse can keep you nice and warm so you get well and your arm not be sick any more. Soon you come back to school all nice and well."

"Miss Brown, I think sure I die. Teacher, you tell all second reader boys all can be good now and Mr. Willis, big man teacher, no scold them hard any more."

"Yes, Louie, I will tell them but why—"

"All second reader boys be good, all time now, not stand on stairs, big boys laugh ever' day, point finger, say 'shame.' You tell 'em all be good now, please teacher."

"Why—"

"Teacher, little boys go out on walk first when leave schoolhouse. Then stand till captains call all names. Little boys walk first, on sidewalk, then little medium boys, then big medium boys, then great, big boys. Little boys wait, wait for big boys to come. Little boys get very awful cold when wait so long. Always my arm sick all day and all night when it much gets cold. I think I go die now, Miss Brown, teacher, so you tell second reader boys I very sorry they get so much hard scolded, 'cause it don't do no good, anyway. I come hospital just the same."

"But what about the boys being good now, Louie?"

"They always bees bad ever' cold day, teacher," the patient, weak voice went on, "then we get a punishment and man teacher say, very cross, 'Stay in schoolhouse till all big boys march out.' Very

much nice warm in schoolhouse. Then we stands on stairs, then my arm *not* sick all day, all night."

"Louie, Louie, do you mean that the boys were naughty on the stairs, so that you could stay in the warm schoolhouse until all the rest of the school had marched out, so that you would not stand so long in ranks, out in the cold, and then your arm would not hurt you so much?" The words fairly stumbled over themselves as the meaning of the child's halting English came to her and the puzzling problem of the past few weeks was solved.

"Yes'm, they much nice boys. You no scold them, please teacher. I tired now. Tell—boys—I sorry—no good—"

The child dropped off to sleep and Miss Brown wiping the tears from her eyes, went back to her room. That evening at the study hour, she called the eight boys of the Indian dance to her consultation room, and told them what Louie had said. Then she added, "I wish you would tell me why you tied Juan to the tree. Did it have anything to do with Louie? I know so much that you are free to tell me the rest."

They stood in silence for a moment then John spoke: "Teacher, when I come to school, my father and my mother say I must always be good to school mates and always be good to boys not so big as me. Then teacher, you say boys must always be good to littler boys. Louie he very much baby. He sick when he get cold, 'cause he come very warm country—no snow, no cold wind. So all eight boys make promise, one boy one day, then 'nother boy 'nother day must be little bit bad on stairway, then big principal teacher scold, say, 'All boys second reader must stay on stairs till all other boys march out of schoolhouse.' Very nice and warm in schoolhouse, cold, awful cold wind on walk where boys wait for roll call.

"Juan he make a promise too, then it's very cold day and wind blow and it comes his turn and *he no bees bad*. All boys in second reader class march out first and wait on walk till all other classes march out. Little Louie he get cold, very sick all night, cry, cry all night. He 'fraid doctor. All boys 'fraid hospital, 'fraid die."

"Why did you tie Juan to the tree and dance around him?"

"He big boy, Miss Brown, bigger 'en Louie. He come cold, cold country. Cold wind not hurt him. Hurt Louie. We think *scare* him *good*, make him *think* kill so he not tell lie when he make promise. Indian must not lie when he make promise. *When Indian make promise he must do it*, all chiefs say so. We very sorry, teacher, that we must be bad but Louie he cry very hard when he's arm sick all night, all day."

Miss Brown tried to put her arms around the whole eight at once. "You dear unselfish little boys! I want you all to make me a promise, an Indian promise. Next time will you come to me and tell me when anything like this happens? I will tell you what to do so that you will not need to do bad things because there is always a right way, and I will help you, too."

"Will you write the promise on the paper, teacher, and can we all sign it in red ink?"

"Like in the story I told you one day?"

"Yes'm, and we always keeps the promise. An' Louie, can he sign it too, teacher, even if he is much baby?"

"Yes, Louie too."

Miss Brown drew up the promise and she and the boys all signed it in the coveted red ink, Louie signing also when he was nursed back to health and returned to the schoolroom with many wonderful tales of the nice things to eat "over at hospital." Since then the boys are not so " 'fraid hospital, 'fraid doctor, 'fraid die" for they are confident that whatever the strange ways of the white man, teacher loves them and teacher knows best.

Holtzner's Old-fashioned Honesty.*

BY CHAS. K. THEOBALD.

SIDE from being the only baker in Blankly, Aleck Smartley was a politician for what extra money he could pick up. In both endeavors he had been successful.

In the bakery business, for more than twelve years, he had successfully managed to keep out competition while selling his bread and pies to Blankly's fifteen thousand inhabitants. That is to say he had always succeeded, by fair means or foul—and he usually employed the latter—in putting his competitors out of business before they had fairly begun.

As a politician, Alderman Smartley of the Fourth, as he finally came to be called, had succeeded himself in office for so many years that he no longer feared an opponent at election time. But what methods he employed to attain this end were never rightly known.

Carl Holtzner, a good natured little German—who left behind him, in Germany, his "young brudder" and brought with him to Blankly his "old mudder" and his altruistic ways—baked the first loaf of bread that Smartley sold in the city. In fact, it was Holtzner's simple honesty and his genial disposition that contributed largely to the success of the bakery.

From baker to foreman, and thence to manager, had been his gradual rise, until now he had become the mainstay of the business; and Alderman Smartley of the Fourth might give his political affairs his undivided attention and rest assured that his bakery was making money, with every penny accounted for, under Holtzner's supervision.

One night in the city hall, some minutes prior to the meeting of the Council, Mayor Bigsby, with an assumed air of unconcern, placed in Smartley's hand an open letter for the latter to read.

Smartley gleaned from the sheet that a Mr. Blackstone, from a neighboring town, was seriously contemplating moving to Blankly for the sake of his wife's health, and, more than likely, would move

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his bakery business with him. He would be in Blankly, so the letter ran, the latter part of August, on other matters; but, in advance of his coming, would the mayor please inform the writer if the bakery business there was overcrowded; what was the population of Blankly, the rate of taxation, license, and so forth.

Smartley, with a monopoly on Blankly's bread output, pondered long and frowningly over this unwelcome news. This fellow Blackstone, with his sick wife, had no right to earn a living baking bread in Blankly—not if Aleck Smartley could prevent it. And prevent it he would—he *must*. But how?

"Looks as if you're going to have another fight on your hands, Aleck," Mayor Bigsby said, finally, interrupting Smartley's train of thought. "What had I better write him, do you think?"

Smartley slowly folded and returned the letter.

"Write him what you like," he answered curtly. "He's coming over, anyway, to look around for himself. Let him come and get into business, for all the good it can do him. You know how Jamison, White and the other bakers went—this fellow Blackstone will only follow suit."

Smartley trumped up some trivial plea and begged to be excused for absenting himself from the Council Meeting. He bought a pocketful of black cigars and viciously bit into the end of one; then took a long walk out into the suburbs, smoking and frowning all the way.

When he returned the shops and stores were closing their doors for the night. He made straight for the bakery, smiling serenely.

Holtzner was entering the store from the bake-shop, in the rear, wiping his hands on his apron, preparing to attend to the wants of a belated customer, when Smartley walked in through the front door.

"I'll have a word with you, at your leisure, Carl," he said by way of greeting, and repaired to the office—in an obscure corner of the bakery, enclosed by a low, wooden railing and partly hidden by a tall bread-case.

When his customer had departed, Holtzner closed and locked the front door and entered the office.

"What it is you wanted, Mr. Schmartley?" he inquired, evidently surprised at the late hour of his employer's visit.

Smartley sat at a desk, drumming with his pencil on a small memorandum-book, and fouling the air with the fumes from one of his strong cigars.

"Carl, how would you like to open a shop in your own name?

Take a seat and have a cigar." Smartley had a way of always coming to his point at once.

Holtzner stared at his employer in open-mouthed astonishment, mechanically took the proffered cigar and sat down.

"What it is you mean, Mr. Schmartley? A shop of mine own?" he asked, doubting if he had heard aright.

"Not exactly that, Carl," the other corrected, "but one conducted under your own name. Listen, Carl. I want you to do something for me—and advance your own interests at the same time. I propose to open a branch-bakery, and because I know the public dislike the methods I have taken in the past to suppress competition, and would not eat my bread now if there were any other place in town to buy it, I don't want my name to appear in the new concern. You are to open the new bakery—with my money, you understand—in your own name, and, as far as the public is concerned, I am to have no hand in it. Will you do this for me, Carl?"

Holtzner scratched his head thoughtfully before he replied.

"I know der peoples don't like it some, at all, Mr. Schmartley, der way you closes der other fellers up all der time and keeps der bread business by yourself. I likes to help you out some, but mine old mudder, Mr. Schmartley?—you know I am telling you many times already dot she wants me soon to take her back to Chermany, where mine young brudder is a baker, who she wants to see him bad. If I gets mixed up in dot kind of business, it takes me not soon again to get out when I wants to take mine old mudder to Chermany. Ain't it?"

"You didn't quite let me finish, Carl," Smartley said quickly, determined to gain his point. "Of course I will increase your wages, and, as a remuneration for your faithful services in the past, you will be entitled to twenty per cent of the profits of the new business—and you invest nothing but your labor.

"We will have a settlement—well, say the first of January, and then you can take your mother back to the old country with more money in your pockets than you have now; or you may continue with the business, as you see fit. What do you say, Carl?"

Holtzner gave this new phase of the subject considerable thought, and carefully lit his cigar before he replied.

"You have make me one good propositions," he said at length, "and I am much obliged for the confidences you have by me, but I—don't—know." He scratched his head again. "Is it right dot you wants to fool all der peoples, Mr. Schmartley? Will der courthouse let you do dot? I don't want to—"

"Carl! Carl!" Smartley admonished. "How many times must I tell you to put aside that old-fashioned honesty of yours? You'll never amount to anything until you do. Suppose we do fool the people? What of it? Everyone else is doing it these days. You will give your customers a five-cent loaf of bread for a nickel, won't you? That's not stealing, is it?"

"No—o," Holtzner admitted, thoughtfully. "I don't think dot is stealing." He scratched his head once more and reflected: "Yes, I could give them their money's worth." Then, inquiringly, to Smartley: "I can run der shop like it was mine own, Mr. Schmartley?"

"As if it were your own entirely," Smartley quickly agreed, prompt to force his advantage. "I'll give you two thousand dollars in the morning. You rent a place, open business and run it as you please; I won't even speak to you for six months, if you like. You'll do this for me, Carl?—and for yourself and your mother?"

"I'll do it, Mr. Schmartley," and they shook hands on the bargain.

They continued to discuss the matter for some length of time, but never once did Smartley mention Blackstone's name, nor give Holtzner the slightest hint of his real object in establishing another bakery.

A week later, much to the surprise of the people of Blankly, *The Morning Herald* announced, in bold, black type, that Carl Holtzner, for many years connected with Smartley's Bakery, had opened a shop of his own, and would thank his friends and the public for a share of their patronage.

Whereupon his friends and the public predicted that Alderman Smartley of the Fourth would put the new bakery out of business in less than a month.

But, strange to say, Smartley made no attempt to put up his usual fight. He merely hired a new baker to take Holtzner's place and conducted his business the same as before—and smiled contentedly as he thought of a certain Mr. Blackstone who was coming to the city in a week or so to "look around."

From the very beginning, Holtzner began to apply the principles of his "old-fashioned honesty" to his business. Each loaf of bread bore a little printed slip, pasted on it:

CARL'S HONEST BREAD.
GUARANTEED A POUND AND A LITTLE MORE.
WEIGH IT.

He operated no delivery wagons, but sold his bread over the

counter, explaining that the value of the money saved in this way was put into his bread, thus giving his patrons full value received.

The new bakery leaped into public favor from the start, and, so well was it patronized that, in less than a month, Smartley's business fell off fifty per cent.

The submissive—and certainly unusual—attitude of Smartley's regarding his supposedly new competitor quite naturally occasioned a rumor that this was a new scheme of his to ward off competition—that his bakery and Holtzner's were one and the same business.

Smartley most emphatically denied this, privately when questioned, and publicly in the morning paper.

Holtzner, too, much to his aversion for shunning the truth at any time, was subjected to many embarrassing queries. He managed, however, to get around the matter by questioning his inquisitors in turn. "Don't I got no right to be in business by mineself?" he would ask when approached on the subject; or "Don't you see mine name by der door?" or questions to the same effect.

As mentioned in his letter to the mayor, Blackstone paid a visit to Blankly the early part of August. He brought his invalid wife with him, and arranged for her stay in the sanitarium, in order that she might receive the fresh-air treatment as the doctors had prescribed.

He found two bakeries doing business in the city instead of one, as the mayor had previously written him, and, after sizing up the situation, he decided that a third one would hardly pay.

Probably Smartley would sell out, he thought, and reasoned that it would be almost useless to broach Holtzner on such a subject, as the German was making too much money. Blackstone concluded he would try Smartley.

"No, I don't care to sell," Smartley replied, with an ill-concealed grin of satisfaction, when Blackstone finally located him in the city hall and put his question.

"I was in hopes you would," the other returned, disappointedly. "I am anxious to buy and will pay a fair price for your business. You see, I wish to locate here on account of my wife's ill health. I had intended opening a bakery here in opposition to yours, but I see you already have a strong competitor in Holtzner; so I hardly think a third one will pay. Now, your business would just suit me, Mr. Smartley. Don't you think an interesting offer might induce you to sell?"

No, Smartley would not sell under any circumstances, and so the matter ended.

Blackstone reluctantly took his departure, explaining that he would pay his wife a visit during the Christmas holidays, and he hoped that Smartley might reconsider the matter at that time.

A few weeks later, Holtzner conceived another bright idea in keeping with his altruistic ways. He had the morning paper insert this advertisement in its columns:

TO MY PATRONS.

It is my desire to share part of my profit with you. Commencing to-day, the slips on my bread will be numbered consecutively, beginning with number one. Each Saturday night, in my bakery, at eight o'clock sharp, a number corresponding with some number on my bread sold during the week will be drawn by a disinterested party. The holder of the number thus drawn will receive twenty dollars in gold. Save your slips.

CARL HOLTZNER.

The following Saturday night, at eight o'clock, standing room was at a premium in Holtzner's Bakery. Monday morning an extra baker was put to work.

Spite of the fact that Smartley's bakery was now barely paying expenses, its owner continually wore a prosperous-looking smile. This revived the old rumor that Smartley must have a hand in Holtzner's business.

"Aleck," Mayor Bigsby asked one day, determined, if possible, to get at the truth of the matter, "as your friend, I want you to tell me the truth about Holtzner's bakery. Is it a fact or not that you own the shop and Holtzner is running it for you?"

Smartley looked at the mayor, wearily amused—such questions were becoming monotonous.

"I can only repeat," he emphatically replied, "what I have said a thousand times before and published in the paper: I have no interest whatever in Holtzner's business."

"I hope so, Aleck, for your own good." The mayor was still a little doubtful of the truth of this statement. "Otherwise, you might some day find yourself placed in an awkward position, for you know it is unlawful to enter into a combine for the purpose of suppressing competition."

Thus, on all occasions, did Smartley deny his connection with Holtzner's business.

The Christmas holidays were now approaching, and with them the first day of January—the date agreed upon for an accounting

with Holtzner. Smartley stuck one of his favorite black cigars at a happy angle between his teeth and fell to thinking.

He estimated—in fact, he had been assiduously calculating for the past five months—that the "branch" must have easily cleared a thousand dollars by now—and the business was still growing.

"Why didn't I think of the scheme long ago," he reflected. "That simple fool of a Dutchman would have made me rich by this time. I was a fool to offer him twenty per cent of the profits. He would just as willingly have accepted ten.

"Well, Blackstone—poor fool! How easily you scared! I have you to thank for the idea. No chance for you now, you'll say, when you visit your wife this Christmas and see what a big business Holtzner is doing."

Smartley never felt better in his life. At the last meeting of the City Council he had been appointed as a committee of one to superintend the buying of a new fire engine for Blankly. This meant a trip to New York, with his expenses paid—and trust Alderman Smartley of the Fourth to know how to pick up a little "side money" on the deal.

True, he considered, he might not get back on the first day of January to settle with Holtzner, but that could easily wait. Holtzner was making money, and there would be no hurry now to take his "old mudder" to Germany.

A week before Christmas, with the collar of his overcoat pulled tightly about his throat, and valise in hand, Smartley stood ready to board the arriving north-bound train as soon as it would come to a full stop in front of the station. A familiar figure, that he recognized at once as Blackstone, alighted from one coach as Smartley shoved his valise upon the platform of another.

"Came to look around again, did you?" Smartley chuckled derisively to himself, and climbed aboard the train.

The new arrival, unconscious of Smartley's proximity, hired a little negro to carry his valise, and took his way uptown, beside the boy.

A few yards from the station, Blackstone stooped to pick up a small memorandum-book, lying on the walk. A natural curiosity prompted him to open the book.

Aleck Smartley's name and address appeared on the inside cover, and, on the first page, Blackstone read:

"July 1st. $2,000.00 to Holtzner for branch; settlement, Jan. 1st."

Other memoranda followed, which he did not take the time to read.

"Two thousand dollars to Holtzner for branch? Settlement the first of January?" he wonderingly repeated to himself. "Holtzner?" he ruminated. "Can it be the baker, Carl Holtzner? And if so, why—"

Blackstone abruptly closed the book and slipped it into his pocket.

"Say, boy," he asked, quite casually, of the little negro at his side, "do you know how long Holtzner, the baker, has been in business here?"

"Lemme see," the boy reflected. "'Bout six months, I 'speck."

Blackstone quickly calculated the number of months between July the first and January the first, and considered the answer to his question well worth a dime.

"He used to work for Mr. Smartley, did he not?"

"Thanky sir—yassah," the boy affirmed, pocketing the coin. "Mr. Carl worked for Mr. Smartley 'bout ten years, I 'speck, an' some folks say he's working for him yit."

"That's queer. How can Mr. Holtzner be in business for himself and still be working for Mr. Smartley?" Blackstone fed the boy another dime.

"I dunno, boss, but Mr. Smartley am a mighty smart man. He done run free or four bakers outer town already, and folks say he's running Mr. Carl's shop to keep any more from opening up agin him. Mr. Smartley am pow'ful smart, yas-sah! He done gone to New York to buy a new fire engine for the—"

"I am going to the sanitarium, boy," Blackstone interrupted, as they reached the main street.

No more was said until they had reached their destination, where the visitor took his valise from the boy and paid him.

"Do you know when Mr. Smartley is expected to return?" inquired Mr. Blackstone.

"I, I dunno, boss," the little negro stammered, staring at the fifty-cent piece in his hand as if he half expected its donor to demand some change. "He jess lef' dis mornin' on the same train you come by."

* * * * * * *

Just at this time, Holtzner was as busy as the proverbial bee. Imbued with the Christmas spirit, another bright idea had come his way. He had baked an unusually large Christmas cake, and placed it on exhibition in his show-window.

The cake was a perfect model of a woodland snow-scene,

representing Santa Claus up to date, in a motor-car loaded with good things, descending a winding roadway toward a cosy little cottage at the base of a hill—the lowest point on the cake.

Suspended above the ornament a large placard read:

> To be given away Saturday night (Christmas Eve) to the prettiest girl in Blankly. This is to be determined by ballot. Each slip from "Carl's Honest Bread" represents one vote. Write your favorite's name and your own on your slips and leave them here each day.
>
> The candidates' names and their scores will be published daily in the morning paper. The girl receiving the largest number of votes by eight o'clock on Christmas Eve will be given the cake.
>
> Your own name on your slips entitles you to draw, as heretofore, for the twenty dollars in gold in Saturday night's drawing.

The result of this was surprising. The young swains of Blankly, each determined to win the cake for his sweetheart, bought "Carl's Honest Bread" in advance of its baking—and would have bought the coupons without the bread, had Holtzner permitted it.

The contest was at its height, and Holtzner was selling bread that was never eaten when Blackstone paid this second visit to Blankly, and, on the day following his arrival, strolled into the bakery.

He held a long and animated interview with Holtzner; and there were other and shorter interviews the next and following days, but what passed between the two was strictly private.

On the third day of January, Smartley returned from New York, looking prosperous and feeling fine, thoroughly well satisfied with himself and the success of his trip.

As he swaggered through the door of "the branch" he was surprised to see Blackstone, with his sleeves rolled up and wearing a white apron, behind the counter. Then he smiled superciliously, secure in the thought that Blackstone had relinquished all idea of opening a rival shop and was now working for Holtzner—and for him, Alderman Smartley of the Fourth! He could hardly conceal the satisfaction the thought afforded him.

"This is indeed a most pleasant surprise, Blackstone," was his greeting, as he grasped the other's hand effusively. "Glad to know you've come to stay with us—some of the best people on earth live here.....I just dropped in to see Holtzner on a little business. Is he in?"

"No," Blackstone returned, coldly, "but he requested me to give you this when you called." With which he brought some papers from an inside vest-pocket, selected a letter from among the lot and gave it to his caller.

Smartley looked perplexed, but opened the envelope and read the letter through without a word:

"Deer Mister Smartley:

"I not like it der way you do by this branch business any more. Mister Blackstone, whose wife she is sick like mine old mudder is now, is one good man and tells me something I not know before. You not want for him to make a living, he says; but he must got to stay here by his sick wife, so I am helping him out some.

"Mine old mudder, which she says she not can die good in this country, begs me right away to take her back to Germany to see mine young brudder, who is a baker, once more. So I am selling out der branch to Mister Blackstone and going back to der old country.

"But I am not like to steal anything from you, so I am leaving with Mister Blackstone, who is honest man, der money you give me last July to open der branch. He gives it right away to you, so you not to lose anything. Ain't it?

"Maybe I am coming back sometime again, maybe not, I don't know. But anyhow it takes you not long to make some money in der shop if you gives der peoples their money's worth.

"Carl Holtzner."

"Here is my certified check, drawn in your favor, for two thousand dollars—the money you gave Holtzner last July to open 'the branch,'" Blackstone said, calmly, when Smartley had finished reading his letter, and stood staring into vacancy.

Smartley looked bewilderedly at the check in the other's extended hand, but made no move to take it.

"And this," Blackstone continued, shoving a strip of typewritten paper under Smartley's nose, "is my receipt for the purchase price of this shop, signed by Holtzner and properly witnessed before a notary-public—and to the validity of which everybody in Blankly will testify."

Smartley was too dazed to make a reply.

"You may take the check or leave it, as you please," Blackstone went on briskly, and with an air of finality. "But, in either event, I can't spare you any more of my time this morning, as this is my busy day."

"Good morning, Mr. Smartley," the new dispenser of Carl's Honest Bread" concluded, and walked behind the counter to wait on a customer, leaving Alderman Smartley of the Fourth staring foolishly at the check in his hand.

The Ex-Convict's Plunge.*

BY HERMAN LANDON.

OOLITTLE, of the Central Detective Bureau, slunk into the shadow of a row of trees that lined the sidewalk in front of the Rugby mansion. The man he had pursued from the glittering chaos of the downtown district to the fashionable suburb known as the millionaires' colony, had also stopped, and now he stood, shivering and hesitant a few paces from the detective. The prison pallor of the face, and its hard, wrinkled lines, were plainly visible in the white glare shed by the street lamp.

"Didn't I know it was Elton Gates the minute I lamped him comin' out of that Dago lodging house?" soliloquized Doolittle after another glimpse of the man's face. "And him just out of pen after doin' his seven year trick! And now he is already scheming some new deviltry!"

Suddenly realizing his indiscretion, Gates at that moment darted from the path of light against which his lithe figure was vividly silhouetted. The steel gate clicked, and the ex-prisoner crept up the broad cement walk toward the mansion, the long shadows cast by towering trees shielding his movements. The detective pursuing, he crawled around the rear of the building and with a deft movement leaped over the veranda railing.

"Fine night for a job," mused Doolittle, crouching below the veranda. "Rugbys gone to the theayter, of course, and the servants takin' it easy. Well I'll be—"

Almost noiselessly a door had flung open in front of Gates, something white fluttered for a moment in the doorway, there were snatches of subdued but excited conversation, and then Gates disappeared within.

"Aha, he's got an accomplice," muttered Doolittle as he swung himself over the railing and followed Gates into the house. He steeped into a large dark room just as he thought he saw a figure vanishing at its farther side. An occasional gleam from an electric

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lamp carried by the intruder facilitated the detective's pursuit. They traversed several rooms and dimly lighted corridors, then ascended a stairway, and after further exploration stopped in front of a door. Doolittle could hear the heavy excited breathing of the ex-convict as he shoved the door open.

Gates switched on the electric light and began a search of the room, whose soft, bright-colored furniture and girlish trinkets proclaimed a feminine occupant. Peeping through the door, which stood slightly ajar, the detective could easily observe the movements of the man without risking detection himself. There were numerous costly vases, valuable paintings, jewelry, and rare bric-a-brac, but Gates paid no attention to these. Presently he snatched an object from a little table in a corner, held it under the light, his fingers trembling violently, and examined it closely. The man's pale, shriveled features twitched nervously, then a cold smile wrinkled the corners of his mouth, and he slipped the object into his pocket and extinguished the light.

Doolittle dodged quickly down the corridor as the ex-convict hurried from the room. For a minute or two his amazement was too great to permit pursuit.

"Well, what do you know about that?" he muttered as the other's figure vanished down the hallway. "What should a man want to steal a thing like that for? This house jammed full of real valuables, and here this fellow sneaks in and walks away with a photograph!" He shook his head in perplexity, and then dashed after the retreating figure. "It ain't natural—"

Having returned to the room on the floor, the detective was arrested by low voices. Hiding behind heavy curtains, he saw Gates and a young woman dressed in white standing near the door, the man's hand clutching the knob.

"No, I didn't see her," Gates was saying, "but I guess I saw enough—all I was looking for. Here's a ten spot for you, and more later. I'll see you again." Then he hurried from the house.

"Guess I won't pinch him tonight," meditated Doolittle as he hurried after the ex-convict. "Wonder what the fellow means, bribin' his way into a house to steal a photograph. Well I'll be hanged if I can see through it!"

He followed Gates to the tumbledown lodging house on the river front kept by Dago Mike, a retreat for yeggs and pickpockets. He trailed him up the groaning stairway, saw him enter his room, and tarried at the door, his ear at the keyhole in order to intercept the slightest sound of unusual nature, until the light was extinguished

within. Then Doolittle, growling at a mystery as impenetrable as it had been an hour ago, left Dago Mike's.

Having reached the sidewalk, he stopped abruptly, his chin tilted in his hand. Then he nodded and grinned. He remembered now. Clarence Rugby, president of the Third National—the man whose home the ex-convict had just invaded, was the person who had sent Gates to the penitentiary. Gates, he now recalled, was assistant cashier in the bank, and got away with twenty thousand bucks. Cleverest robbery the Central Detective station had looked into in a good many years. Gates was sent over for ten years. Paroled a week ago for good behavior. That was the dope. Doolittle nodded complacently. But the next moment he scowled again. "That don't explain why the fellow walks into this man Rugby's house and steals a bit of pasteboard worth about a dime," he thought. "The fellow must be daffy."

At six o'clock the following morning Doolittle, having assumed one of his most effective disguises, stood in a doorway across the street from Dago Mike's. Three quarters of an hour later Gates appeared, this time clean shaven, scrubbed, and wearing a neat business suit. Even the prison pallor had been subdued, the detective thought. The ex-convict walked briskly into the street and swung himself upon a passing car.

Doolittle followed. They rode for miles, traversing streets of tumbledown shacks and dirty localities of polyglot speech. Gates crouched in a seat in his corner, apparently lost in thought. They were passing through a little neighborhood business center when at last he stepped off. The detective saw him enter a door in the middle of the block and hurried after him. There was a sign in the window which proclaimed that photos—three for a quarter—were to be had while you wait. Doolittle stepped inside and pretended to have become interested in a collection of pictures on the wall. He had stopped near the door, but could easily hear the conversation between Gates and the proprietor.

"Yes, times is hard—very hard," the latter was saying. "There ain't much money in this business any more."

"No?" Gates drawled. "Would you mind telling me just how much your profits amount to per week?"

Doolittle, squinting warily, observed the proprietor eyeing Gates.

"Thinking of going into the business?" he asked.

"Not exactly. Might, though," Gates answered. "In another part of the city, maybe. That's why I am interested in knowing how much you turn over in a week."

"Well, sir, just barely enough to make a living. I wouldn't advise any man to go into this business. But if you want the figures I would just as soon tell you that week before last I made four seventy-five, last week I cleared fifteen, and this week, today being Friday, I'll probably be about ten to the good. Pretty hard picking, eh?"

Gates advanced a step, stooping over the proprietor's desk, and Doolittle could with difficulty distinguish his next words.

"That makes twenty-nine seventy-five for the three weeks, don't it?" he asked huskily. "Tell you what I'll do. I'll give you twice that much if you let me have the place for a week. I'll make it even sixty. Don't ask questions, but tell me yes or no."

The other hesitated. "It don't look right," he protested feebly. "I don't see what you might want with the place. But that coin looks good to me. The wife and I need a vacation anyway. Guess I take you up."

Gates produced a roll of bank notes and counted out some money. "Now get me straight," he admonished. "You are not to come within three blocks of this place until a week from to-morrow morning. You've got to let me alone. And here is another two hundred dollars to cover damage or loss of stock."

Dumbfounded by the sight of so much money, the proprietor sat speechless. Then he stuck the roll into his pocket. "Want to take possession at once?" he asked.

"This minute." Then Gates, apparently observing Doolittle for the first time, turned to him with an apology.

"Want your picture taken? Too bad, but I've just taken over the place, and I've got to get settled before I get down to work.

Grumbling in mock disgust, Doolittle departed. The mystery was deeper than ever. What did this fellow Gates, just out of jail, want with a photograph gallery for a week? he wondered. Then the thought recurred to him that perhaps the man was crazy. Who but a lunatic would make himself liable to imprisonment for life for the sake of a cheap photograph, and who but an idiot would pay good money for the use of a shop he did not know how to use?

The detective, standing across the street from the studio Gates had just rented, shook his head. Then he glimpsed a sign over the basement door immediately below the photograph gallery. "Store or Work Shop for Rent," he read. "Apply to Appleby & Whitney." He meditated for a moment. "Guess I'll be watching the fellow's game," he thought, and proceeding to the real estate office of

Appleby & Whitney, he rented the basement room under Elton Gates' photograph gallery.

The wait proved tedious, but the time was employed by Doolittle to some advantage. Loitering in a cigar store across the street he could see Gates sitting at the window of his studio for many hours at a time, reading the papers and watching the procession on the street. The few customers who entered the photograph gallery departed in a minute or two, which made it plain to the detective that Gates was not desirous of working up a trade. In the afternoon of the first day two tradesmen, whom the detective by the tools they carried, identified as an electrician and a locksmith, arrived at the studio, and Doolittle saw them tinkering with the door and the lock under Gates' direction. Aside from that the ex-convict passed his time in idle monotony.

Toward evening Doolittle made an examination of the basement room he had rented. Apparently this room and the studio above had at one time been connected, for a stairway slanting toward the ceiling led to a door in a corner of the room. This door, Doolittle surmised, must lead to the rear of the photograph gallery, but it was nailed securely, and the detective feared that attempts to open it would arouse Gates' suspicion. He decided to wait until the latter went to luncheon, which was not until late in the evening. Then Doolittle procured a claw-hammer, and after half an hour's arduous toil succeeded in opening the door. It led, as he had suspected, into a little store room in the rear of the studio. This room was separated from the outer one by a frail board partition, and the two compartments were connected by a door. Doolittle was immensely satisfied. He had established a means of communication between himself and the ex-convict and could, if occasion should demand, swoop down upon Gates on a minute's notice. But the mystery he had set out to solve was, he was forced to admit, as baffling as ever.

The following day nothing happened. Doolittle, from his position in the cigar store across the street, saw Gates sitting by the window in his studio. He fancied the ex-convict was becoming nervous and fretful. At times he would pace the floor hurriedly, looking intently into the street each time he reached the window.

Doolittle stepped to the counter and purchased a fresh cigar. As he again turned toward the window he caught a brief glimpse of Gates gazing into the street and hastily resuming his seat; the next moment a young woman halted in front of the photograph gallery, glanced at the number above the door, and entered.

The detective rushed into his little basement room, hurried up

the stairway, and pressed his ear against the flimsy door. But all he could detect was an indistinct mumble of words. Deftly and warily he opened the door, thanking his stars for his foresight in having unfastened it the previous evening. Then he stepped cautiously into the room and crept up to the board partition. Through a crack he could see Gates and the woman, the latter a stylishly gowned young person with a wealth of dark hair and big, frightened eyes. Every trace of Gates' nervousness had vanished. Sprawling leisurely in a big arm-chair, the corners of his lips twisted into a vague smile, he was addressing the girl.

"Won't you be seated, Miss Hazel Rugby?" he said, and Doolittle stared in amazement at this mention of the name of the bank president's daughter. "You see, introductions are not necessary. I knew you the minute you came in."

The girl tossed her head haughtily. "I called to see about having—" she began. Then she checked herself abruptly, reeled for an instant, and gazed into the man's face.

"Elton Gates!" she exclaimed. "Elton—you—" The rest of the sentence was twisted into a short cry, and Gates led the girl to a chair. Standing before the cringing figure with arms folded, he looked long and intently into her face.

"Thought you would remember me," he said hoarsely. "It's been only seven years since— But I suppose I've changed a lot. Men sometimes do, you know. Those seven years were pretty long, Hazel."

A faint sob escaped her lips, and her slender body trembled slightly. Without speech, her eyes dimly following the cracks in the floor, she cowered before him.

"I was a young man then—seven years ago. I was a fool," Gates resumed. "A big fool, perhaps. I loved you—you, the daughter of a millionaire. I loved you madly and foolishly. Queer, wasn't it? I loved you so foolishly that when my own salary didn't suffice to buy you the silly trinkets that a man in love with a millionaire's daughter is supposed to purchase for her, I borrowed. Then your father told me that if ever I would become worthy of you I must show my business ability—do something big."

With arms still folded across his chest, Gates looked down upon the girl and smiled cynically. Doolittle wondered what he was leading up to. He had already decided that Gates was either an idiot or one of the most remarkable young men he had ever had dealings with.

"Then, being young and a fool," Gates went on, "I set about to

follow your father's advice. I lay awake nights scheming. I scarcely knew what I was doing. But I was going to do something big and win you. I saw a chance to win a great deal of money by plunging a little. The chances were nearly all on my side, of course. So I stole—stole twenty thousand from your father's bank. Of course the market went the wrong way, and I was promptly exposed and arrested. Your father saw to it that I got a big, stiff sentence.

"I went to prison. I almost expected I would hear from you—that you would make some effort to see me. You see, I was still a big fool. You, of course, never made the least effort to see me or to get word to me during all the seven years I was in jail. Why should you—you, the daughter of a bank president and a millionaire? I didn't mean to blame you. Yet it hurt a little bit—can't you understand?"

The girl raised her head as if to speak, but Gates interrupted her.

"When people lie awake in cells at night," he continued, "queer ideas get into their heads. Queer ideas of right and wrong. Your father was perfectly right in sending me to prison. Yet I began to hate him. I hated him so—but what's the use of trying to explain to you how I hated him, for you never spent seven years in prison. I decided to make him pay for it. I was to be avenged. So I lay awake nights in my cell again trying to scheme out an adequate punishment. Finally I hit upon a plan."

Gates laughed hoarsely. "At first I thought it was a brilliant idea," he continued. "I am anxious to hear what you think of it, Hazel. As soon as I got out of jail I was to kidnap the daughter of Clarence Rugby and hold her for ransom. Rude, wasn't it? But extremely effective. To hurt men like your father, you must hit them in their tenderest spot, and that, generally, is their bank account. So I decided to kidnap you and make your father part with half a million or so."

A gleam of fright in her eyes, the girl looked into Gates' face. Then she lapsed back into her limp, motionless position.

"It is wise of you not to try to escape," said Gates, a suggestion of a sneer in his voice. "The doors and windows of this place are controlled by electric contrivances—I had all that attended to in anticipation of your visit—and you are my prisoner. Doesn't sound very nice, does it?"

"What the devil is the fellow driving at?" thought Doolittle. "Wish he'd get through with that sob stuff and get down to business. Just let him try to kidnap the young person, and I— But what gets

me is how he got the lady to come here in the first place. It don't look natural." Then the girl raised her head, and the detective thought he saw something bright glistening in the dark fringes above her eyes.

"I am not afraid of being kidnapped—by you," she said, smiling faintly. "But I wish you would understand, Elton. I was not quite so bad as you thought. I was foolish and had silly notions in my head, for I was hardly more than a child. But I wasn't cruel. I *did* try to help you when you were sent away, and I *did* try to see you. But father—well, somehow he got me aboard a steamer, and I scarcely knew anything until I was in Europe. You must believe me, Elton."

Gates looked into her begging eyes and tear-sprinkled face. "I do believe you," he said deliberately. "And that kidnapping idea—well I had given it up long before I left the prison. It was silly. But I thought of another scheme that was much better. A distant relative of mine wrote me that if I succeeded in reducing my term by good behavior he would give me enough money when I got out to start myself in business. The money is now waiting for me in the bank. I thought it over, but there seemed to be a hitch somewhere. Perhaps I was still a fool, but at times the thought would come to me that if you no longer cared for me nothing in life was worth while. I often wondered if you did. In spite of all, I sometimes had a lurking suspicion that you had not forgotten me entirely. I decided to stake everything on you. If you still loved me I was to start life over again and turn a clean page. If not—well, I resolved I shouldn't care. Perhaps I would rob another bank or two—robbing banks is such a piquant diversion, you know.

"But now that I know that you *do* still care for me," he continued after a brief pause, "I guess I shall try to bury the past and—"

"But how do you know that I care," protested the girl weakly, her voice sounding from afar. "I haven't told you that I do."

"You don't need to tell me. If you don't care for me, why are you here?"

The girl looked up with bewildered eyes. "Why, I am here because—I came here to—" She faltered helplessly.

"Exactly, dear." Gates fondled her little gloved hand. "You came here because you found that a certain photograph of which you thought a great deal had mysteriously disappeared from your room. This being the only place where a copy could be had, you came here to have one made. Simple, isn't it?"

The girl stared into his face in helpless amazement. "Oh, but you don't mean that—"

"Let me tell you all about it, sweetheart, and then we shall go to Rector's for dinner." He kissed the hand he held in his own. "This is how it happened: When I left the prison a week ago or so, I determined I must see you. First of all I must learn whether you still cared for me. I made repeated efforts to see you, but no one would admit me to the house. I tried to lay in wait for you when you went out in your automobile, but found the servants were becoming suspicious and ordered me away. I wrote, but very likely the notes were intercepted.

"As time went on I became more and more anxious to see you. Finally I succeeded in bribing one of the servants. She was to let me into the house one evening when she thought you would be alone at home. She made a miscalculation, however. When I entered your little sitting room, I found that you were out. Then I happened to think of that little photograph I gave you years ago. I wondered if you still kept it. If you did, I thought, that might prove you had not entirely forgotten me. I found it, and something prompted me to slip it into my pocket. At the time I did not know why I did so, but during the night I resolved to make a little experiment. If you still loved me, I thought, you would probably notice its absence immediately, and seek to obtain a copy of it. It was a long shot, but it appealed to me. Guess I was always more or less of a plunger. So I rented this photograph gallery for a week. At first I thought you were not coming. But—"

"I am hungry, dear," interrupted Hazel Rugby. "Won't you take me to dinner?"

Doolittle peeped through the crack in the wall and smiled. "Guess this ain't no case for me," he mumbled as he climbed down the rickety stairway into the basement. "This fellow Gates may be a fool, bu'

An Enlarged Microbe.*

BY ERSKINE M. HAMILTON.

AM a country doctor, and the sign—"John Blanton, M. D."—hangs over my office door in the little town where I live. During my twenty-five years' practice I have tried to keep up with the modern thought of my profession. Especially have I been interested in the theory, now largely accepted, that disease is due to the presence in the human body of certain bacteria or microbes. Each disease has a microbe peculiar to itself, and to cure the disease, and render the body immune, it is only necessary to discover the nature of the microbe and the remedy that will destroy it. It was along this line of investigation that I had a very remarkable experience.

In order that I might study the subject undisturbed I caused a small building to be erected in my back yard, and in this I placed the best and latest chemical apparatus procurable. I spent all my leisure time in this building, and had some marvelous results from my experiments. A number of my discoveries have been favorably mentioned in medical journals. I soon found, however, that no one wished to visit me while at this work. The building was shunned by the neighborhood as something akin to a powder-magazine. Even my own wife would not venture farther than the door. Around my work-room were various glass jars marked "Bacteria of Small Pox," "Yellow Fever Microbes," "Germs of Tuberculosis," and so on, and a look of horror would come over her face every time she saw them.

"Why, John, I wouldn't go into your old bug-hospital for anything," she remarked on one occasion. "I don't see why you want to raise such things when the world is too full of them anyway. I don't blame the neighbors for not coming here often. They don't know what kind of a bug may get hold of them."

"They needn't be alarmed," I answered. "I am doing all this in the interest of science—for their good and protection."

"But, John, it's hard on our children," pursued my wife earnestly.

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"Why, only yesterday, those unmannerly Barclay children got around our Susie and danced up and down shouting: 'There ain't no microbes on me!' It's just awful! I wish I had been there to have spanked them."

"Never mind the Barclay children," I laughed. "The next time they get sick I'll give them an extra dose of castor oil for punishment."

Notwithstanding occasional opposition I continued my experiments. One day I made an astounding discovery. It came in an entirely accidental way—I just blundered upon it—and I was sure that no one knew the secret but myself. I discovered that the application of radium through certain chemical ingredients would cause a microbe to increase in bodily size. I confess I was alarmed at first, for if a tiny animal organism had such power of injury what might it do if enlarged? Still, I was so fascinated that I determined to produce, if possible, a large, living microbe—how large I would settle later. But what kind of a microbe should I enlarge? One of the small pox, yellow fever, or tuberculosis variety might get so big as to be beyond control and become a menace to my family and the community. That would never do. To be safe I must take a specimen of some ordinary and generally harmless disease. After studying the matter I finally selected a promising influenza-microbe as the least harmful.

Of my discovery, and what I intended to do, I told no one. I did not even tell my wife, for I knew that good lady would get into a chronic worry and peace would disappear from the home. I concluded, also, that my experiment might cause unpleasant talk and possible interference from the neighbors if they heard of it. Therefore I worked with locked doors and said nothing. Did I succeed? Indeed, I did. Within three months from the time I began there was walking about my laboratory one of the most remarkable animals ever seen on this planet. It was an influenza-microbe, enlarged to the size of a small dog. In fact it so closely resembled a dog in its shape, hair, and eyes, that I would have taken it for an ordinary canine had I seen it on the street. It was exceedingly docile, and I became quite attached to Mike—as I called my strange pet. But there was one trouble about Mike. Being an influenza-microbe it set me to sneezing whenever it came near me. The increase in size seemed to have given it increased power, and for the moment I would have all the symptoms of a bad cold. These would disappear, however, when the creature left my side for some other part of the room.

Thus the time passed, with my secret undiscovered, until my niece, Nancy Carpenter, came to visit us. Nancy was a great favorite at our house. She was pretty, full of life and fun, and her coming was always welcomed. During her stay it was seldom that one or more of the young people of the town were not at our home. One Thursday afternoon—well do I remember the day—Miss Nancy had a tea-party under the great trees on our lawn, and about a dozen guests were present. My wife and I were enjoying the social time with the others, when a messenger came for me to go into the country to set a broken arm. In my haste to get away I forgot to lock the door of my laboratory. Never before had I neglected this precaution, and this one slip brought trouble. I had been gone about an hour, it seems, when the young people, strolling here and there, came to the laboratory.

"What is this building for?" asked one curiously.

"Oh, this is Uncle John's den. He always keeps it locked, and he's got some awful secrets in here," replied Nancy, stepping forward and trying the door. "Why, it isn't locked after all. I'm going to peep inside."

Without further ado the daring young lady pushed open the door, and the laughing group surged into the room.

"I don't see anything horrid in here," declared Nancy. "There's a lot of jars and things, and—oh, my! Isn't that a cute little brown dog? Come here, doggie—ker-chew! ker-chew! ker-chew!" and a prolonged sneeze ended the sentence.

Mike, apparently delighted to see them, jumped about from one to the other, and in a moment the entire party were sneezing with the utmost violence. In utter exhaustion they rushed from the building into the open air, the microbe following. My wife saw them from a distance, and knowing I wished no one to go into the laboratory she hurried to the scene. Mike saw her coming, and in a playful mood hastened to meet her. She, too, began to sneeze. Then the others took up the refrain as the microbe returned and moved among them, and for a time the nasal explosions were continuous, preventing speech, while facial contortions and streaming eyes dominated the group. Finally the microbe darted into the shrubbery and comparative calm was restored. The party was broken up, however, and Nancy's guests went home red-eyed and dispirited. When I returned I found an excited wife and niece awaiting me.

"Why, I never saw anything like it, John, the way we all sneezed," declared my wife, concluding her story of what had

occurred. "It seemed like each of us had taken a severe cold at the same time, and couldn't stop sneezing. It was ridiculous the way we went on, and it broke up Nancy's party. What do you suppose caused it?"

"Oh, it's nothing but a little epidemic that is going around," I answered evasively. "By the way—that is—you mentioned a little dog. What became of him?"

"He ran off somewhere. I don't blame him for running, for he must have taken us for a lot of lunatics," laughed my wife. "How came he to be in your laboratory?"

"I'm sure I don't know," was my unblushing reply.

I was far from feeling easy, however. The microbe had escaped, and might cause no end of trouble, for which I would be personally responsible. I sincerely hoped the creature had gone to the woods, or had been killed by somebody. Vain hope. I had just gone to bed when the telephone rang. The call was from an old friend, Tom Russell, who lived three blocks away, and he was evidently excited.

"Hello! Is that you, Doctor? I want you to come to my house right away. The devil is to pay over here."

"What seems to be the trouble?" I asked.

"Hanged if I know. Some kind of influenza, I guess. Anyhow, we've all sneezed ourselves nearly to death, and can't stop. Grandma has sneezed her spectacles to pieces, I've sneezed all the buttons off my vest, and the baby has sneezed herself out of the cradle. My wife is badly scared and says it's appendicitis we've got, but it's bad business whatever it is. Hurry up!"

I needed no further information to diagnose the case. That miserable microbe was getting in its work, I was sure of that. I dressed hurriedly and went to my friend's house. Sure enough, there was Mike, wandering about the room, while the entire Russell family kept up a fusillade of sneezing.

"Drive out this confounded dog the first thing," I commanded, almost crossly. "I don't like dogs in a sick room."

With the microbe out of the way the sneezing ceased, of course, and Tom declared that for giving instantaneous relief I stood at the head of my profession. I gave my patients a harmless remedy to use, and further enjoined that on no account were they to allow a cat or dog to enter the house, as I believed those animals had much to do with the spread of influenza. But I went home sick at heart. From where next would I hear of my wretched experiment?

A week slipped by without further disturbance, and I began to

breathe freely. I hoped the microbe had disappeared for good. Then, on a Sunday morning, my wife and I attended church. The day was warm, doors and windows were open, and I sat in my pew expecting to enjoy the service. The preacher was about to give out a hymn when, from a rear door near the pulpit, in came the microbe. I was almost paralyzed at the sight. I dared not move to eject it; I could only watch and wait.

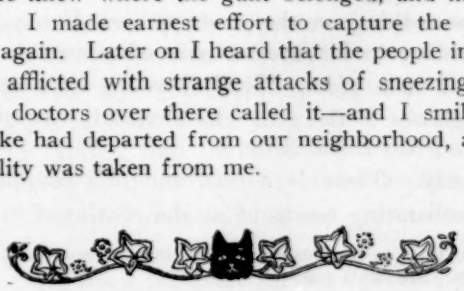
"We will unite in singing hymn number two hundred and eighty-one," announced the preacher, whereupon Mike looked at him and trotted up the steps to his side. "We will sing number—ker-chew! We will sing number—ker-chew! ker-chew! ker-chew!"

The good man paused, and as the paroxysms of sneezing grew worse his head bobbed up and down violently and his false teeth fell to the floor. The young people in the choir, back of him, tittered at this, and the observant Mike concluded to visit them also. The choir ceased tittering at once and began an anthem of sneezing—the soprano and alto taking the leading parts. The congregation viewed the performance in wondering silence for a while, and then laughed. I confess I laughed, also, although I was the real cause of the disturbance. Fortunately Mike became alarmed and ran out of the building.

"Brethren," said the preacher, when he had recovered his breath and his teeth, "I know not what sacrilegious person distributed snuff or other substance in this room, but it is obvious that further services cannot be decorously conducted this morning. The congregation will rise and be dismissed."

The affair caused much excitement and a deal of talk throughout the town, and the trustees of the church offered a reward for the arrest of the perpetrator of the outrage, while the "Weekly Herald" came out with a long editorial on "The Growing Depravity of Our Young Men."

But I alone knew where the guilt belonged, and my conscience troubled me. I made earnest effort to capture the microbe, but never saw it again. Later on I heard that the people in an adjacent county were afflicted with strange attacks of sneezing—"acute influenza," the doctors over there called it—and I smiled. I knew then that Mike had departed from our neighborhood, and a weight of responsibility was taken from me.



The Lookout.*

BY WARREN JUDSON BRIER.

THE shadow of a mountain peak stretching accusing finger toward limitless plains, arid except where touched, here and there, with the magic wand of irrigation, — sage brush, sand dune and prairie-dog town blended by distance into the ashen pallor of death.

An old man, with form angular and bent, thin white locks brushed straight back from his wrinkled forehead, sunken eyes under heavy white eyebrows, eyes that showed wearisome watching and waiting and longing for that which came not.

At his side, sitting on the same boulder with him, a girl of twenty, features oval and regular, a halo of red hair, winsome mouth, clear complexion, white teeth, well rounded form and hands that told the story of toil. A cheerful personality except for the eyes. Hidden in their blue depths was a look of abiding sadness.

To this lookout these two had come, just before nightfall, almost every day for more than a year. When the weather was fair they usually remained an hour or two, making a careful survey of the vast expanse before them, the special object of their inspection being the white roadway, a band that stretches from the foothills up the seeming slope of the perfectly level plain, to the curved line where the gray landscape joins the purple-tinted sky.

"They's something on the road, yender, Emmy," announced the man, holding to his eyes a pair of powerful field glasses. "Looks like a man afoot. Try yer young eyes on it," and he handed the glasses to the girl, who anxiously inspected the road three thousand feet below them.

"Yes, daddy. There is a man and he's coming this way," was her corroborating comment as she continued to look fixedly

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at the lone figure. "Something on his shoulder glistens like a gun barrel."

"I thought that same but I didn't das to say so," declared the old man, excitedly. "Let me hev another try, Emmy," and his fingers worked nervously to get hold of the helpful glasses.

"Sure, Emmy. I seen it gleam jest then," he averred in a tone of elation after having brought the object into focus. This time he kept the glasses long at his eyes, fascinated like a bird under the eye of a serpent.

"Ef thet ain't a soldier with a gun on his shoulder you may call me a Quaker," and again he handed the glasses to the girl, this time with evident reluctance.

While she looked he took from the pocket of his coat on the rock at his side a package of postal cards and letters.

When the girl dropped the glasses into her lap, and, with the corner of her gingham apron, wiped the moisture from her overstrained eyes, the man handed her one of the cards.

"Thet's the last one, Emmy. Read it over agin."

The girl read with a readiness born of many repetitions:

ST. LOUIS, MO., May 1.

DEAR DAD: —

This is nearer to you than I have been since the war. I've got the promise from the company for a leave of absence the last week in May and the first week or two in June. So if nothing happens I'll see you before May is gone. Sorry to disappoint you so many times, but this time I think I'll get to go.

Your affectionate son,

TOM.

"This is the last day o' May, Emmy. I've marked off every day with a piece of red chalk on thet calendar the machine agent gin me. Now I reckon he's comin'. But, say, Emmy, it's eenamost too good to be true," and again he brought the glasses to his eyes, and scanned with a jubilant countenance the distant footman, growing momentarily less distinct, though nearer, for now the shadows of the great range behind them were swiftly spreading across the vast expanse. Beetling crags and huge masses of rocks, in grays and reds, which but a few minutes before had stood in bold outline like the medieval castles of the River Rhine, were losing their individuality and crumbling into night's chaos. The silence was awe-inspiring and oppressive even to those accustomed to it.

Here and there upon the great surface spread out before them

like a map, tilted as though lying upon the incline of a school desk, spots of light began to twinkle. These the watchers knew to be villages of the plain, miles asunder.

The old man finally put the glasses into their case, put on his coat, and began descending the trail to their cottage in the valley several hundred feet below them.

The girl followed him, remarking as they went, "I wouldn't be too sure, Daddy, about its being Tom. Many men and teams come over that road, and you know we have been disappointed hundreds of times." She said this in a regretful tone, reluctant to take away from his childish confidence.

"Sure, we've been disappointed times enough, little gal, but his writin' was never so hope givin' as this last time. An' it's the last o' May, the last o' May."

Giles Gifford was a veteran of the Civil War, and when war broke out in the Philippines he could not well dissuade his son Tom from joining the expedition. A year in the Philippines and then the young man was discharged and returned by way of Europe to New York, where he secured a position with a commission house to travel in the Middle West.

To see his boy once more before he died had become the ruling passion of Gifford's life. In fact it had become a mania, not surprising when it is known that Gifford had passed the age of threescore and ten, and that his mental powers were rapidly failing.

Tom's mother had died when Tom was a lad of eight. Two years later Giles Gifford married a widow with one daughter, Emily, aged six. Tom and Emily had grown up together, lovers from the beginning. But a short time before Tom's enlistment some misunderstanding had arisen and the engagement had been broken off, which may have accounted for the young soldier's reluctance to return home.

Emily's mother was a frail woman, and the removal to the little mountain ranch had not brought the improvement expected, and soon after Tom's departure for the war the mother had died, leaving to Emily the responsibility of caring for the home and helping the aged stepfather work the ranch, a responsibility she had met bravely and nobly.

"Tom won't git here fer an hour yit," Giles informed the girl when they had finally reached the cottage. "Up hill every goll durned rod o' the way arter ye hit the foothills. Ye can't walk up hill more'n four mile an hour ef ye be young an' strong like our Tom. Tom's jest like I was when I was a youngster," and he chuckled at thought of Tom's physical powers. "Heavy knapsack, too, most likely."

"You think he'll come with gun and knapsack after being two years out of the army, Daddy?" asked the girl, gently, as she began washing the supper dishes, left daily after the evening meal while they climbed to the lookout, for the plain was not visible from the cottage.

"I've allers pictered it thataway, Emmy. Reckon Tommy, knowin' I'm an old soldier, would think I'd like to see him come home in 'em an' would go an' put on his hull outfit. Course I don't allow he's wearin' it day in an' day out."

"Perhaps he'll wear it," Emily admitted, not wishing to take away the pleasing belief.

"Say, little gal, oughtn't ye ter cook his supper an' hev it ready fer him? He'll be as hungry as a coyote arter thet fifteen-mile walk from the keers."

"I'll peel some spuds and slice up some bacon and get things ready a little. It won't take long if he comes," was the girl's doubting reply.

"You seem kinder dubious about his comin', Emmy. I would, too, only it's the last day o' May. I ain't felt so sartin' any time afore," and he hurried out to the road which passed their door, leading from the plains below to the great silver mines twenty miles farther up.

Here he strained his eyes to try to discern anything moving on the road below, but the deep cañon into which the road disappeared was dark and silent.

Returning to the house he threw more fuel on the fire, these mountain valleys demanding some artificial heat even on midsummer evenings. Every few minutes he went to the door and peered out and then reseated himself in his old padded Boston rocker near the fire.

Emily's quicker ear was the first to catch the sound of footsteps

on the rocky path to the door. The next instant there came a heavy thumping so loud that Giles himself was startled. He was on his feet in an instant, exclaiming, " Thank God, Emmy, he's come," and he threw open the door.

" Come right in, Tommy boy, I seen yer through the glasses, way down yender! "

In response to this invitation a heavy-set, swarthy-faced man with a big black mustache, shuffled into the room, and the old man fell back in astonishment. Though the girl was herself greatly disappointed her heart-strings tightened at the look that came over the face of her old stepfather. Like the aviator who loses control of his engine, the old soldier fell from the highest altitudes of elation to the lowest depths of ruin.

" You ain't Tom, be ye? " he faltered, and tears sprang to his eyes.

" Tom? Hell, no. I'm Dick and I'm given to raising the old Harry with good lookers like this one," and he chucked Emily familiarly under the chin. " Tom, Dick and Harry. See? " and he slipped his bundle off the barrel of his Mauser rifle, tossed it into a corner and stood the gun against the window casing.

" Supper for two, *mon cher,* and I beg of you delay not. It's a single barreled Dick with a double barreled appetite! "

For a moment Emily was too indignant, too heartsick, to comply with the fellow's boorish demand, but a moment's reflection convinced her that she was in no position to refuse and she set about the preparation of the meal.

" I'd like to wash up a bit. Tramping through your damned alkali desert is enough to squeeze profanity out of a preacher," and the fellow glowered at the old soldier.

" Daddy didn't make the desert and he didn't compel you to walk through it," declared Emily, resenting the man's tone and air.

" Well, that's very much to Daddy's credit," the man replied, as he scanned the girl from golden crown to shoe tips.

When the food was ready the traveler ate greedily and seemed oblivious to everything else.

Gifford strolled out to the kitchen, ostensibly to get a drink of water, but in reality to consult Emily.

"I allow it's a double bar'l Dick with a Gatlin' gun appertite," he remarked in a low tone.

"Daddy that's a dangerous man. We want to look out. We don't stand any chance against such a man, especially when he has a gun."

"Say, Emmy. When you go in ter give him more coffee jest bring the gun out an' I'll hide it under the big rock back o' the house."

So intent was the man upon his food that he did not notice when Emily held the gun at her side and took it out of the room. But when his anaconda appetite was satisfied and he arose from the table he at once noticed that the gun had disappeared.

Gifford was sitting unconcerned in the Boston when Dick made the discovery and the scowl the younger man gave him would have been terrifying to a less courageous nature.

"Better bring that gun back, old man."

"Mister, thirty-seven year ago about this time o' the year an' long afore you was born I was with Gineral Grant at Spottsylvany an' Cold Harbor an' I seen a heap o' harm comin' from hevin' guns around. You kin hev yer gun in the mornin'," and Giles settled back in his rocker, his skinny fingers beating a nervous tattoo on the arms of the chair.

"If you don't get that gun you'll rue it, old man," was the other's fierce retort.

"I was at Cold Harbor, young man, and didn't git scart an' I 'low a feller thet could be at Cold Harbor an' not show no white feather wouldn't show one fer all the imps o' hell. You kin hev the gun in the mornin'," and Giles looked fearlessly into the protruding eyes that glared at him.

"How do you know I'm going to stay all night?"

"I reckon ye'll hef ter. They ain't no other house fer five mile up."

Just then Emily came into the room and took a seat by the fire.

"Can you give me a bunk for the night?" the stranger asked less harshly.

"You kin hev my bed. I kin make it good, here on the settee."

"Who is this Tom you thought had come when I beat on the door?"

"Tom? He's my son. Went off ter the war, the Philippynes, three year ago an' I've been lookin' fer him off an' on fer two year. Didn't never know him, did yer?" and the old man looked eagerly at the stranger.

"His full name is Thomas Hart Gifford," explained Emily.

"Tom Gifford!" and the man gave the girl a cunning and vicious look. "Your brother, eh?"

Gifford hastened to explain. "Tom's my boy by my fust wife an' Emmy is my second wife's gal by her fust husband. So Tom an' Emmy ain't no blood kin." The stranger noticed the color mounting into the girl's face.

"Closer than brother and sister, eh?" his eyes popping out at the girl's beauty, enhanced by the blush. "Hear from him often?"

"I've hearn from him two or three times every year sence he got back ter the United States. Sometimes he writes from Checawgo, sometimes from New Orleens, an' sometimes from Cincinnatter. Last time it was Saint Lewus. Didn't chancet ter meet him?" looking eagerly at the coarse face.

The stranger looked first at one and then at the other of these simple people, but they did not fully realize the devil that lurked in his glance.

"I knew Tom Gifford well," he blurted out. "He saved my life. I was in bathing there at Manila when a crocodile was about to make a sausage Jonah out of me. Tom stood on the bank and up with his rifle and let Mr. Crocodile have it square in the eye."

"Jest like our Tom. Quicker'n greased lightnin' with a gun," chuckled Giles.

"Of course that made me feel under great obligation to him and willing to do him any favor in my power. That's why I wrote all of the letters you've been getting."

"You wrote the letters?" Emily fairly screamed as she peered into the man's impassive face, a death pallor in her own.

Giles Gifford leaned forward holding his breath, only in part comprehending the significance of the man's statement. Finally he spoke, slowly and with effort, running his tongue about in his mouth and over his lips to give sufficient flexibility. "You wrote Tom's letters fer him? Why didn't he write 'em himself? Did he,— did he git a hand took off in the war?" He leaned forward

toward this coarse judge, waiting to receive sentence of life or death.

"Worse yet," and the man's jaws snapped viciously. "You see it's this way. I felt so grateful to Tom I was willing to take a great deal of trouble for him. So when he asked me to write every once in a while to keep up the old man's spirits, and left me enough to pay postage for a lifetime, I wanted to accommodate him. Then, too, you hate to refuse a man anything just before he 'croaks.' And a truthful man must keep his promise," and again he gave the girl a look that made her shudder.

"Croaks?" said the old man, shaking his head.

"What do you mean by croak?" demanded the girl.

"I mean Tom Gifford's dead long ago. That's what."

From the old man's throat came a strange, gurgling sound and Emily sprang to him in time to save him from falling headlong to the floor. The stranger helped her place him on the couch.

"You've killed him," Emily exclaimed, and then hurried for water to bathe his face.

"Oh, not so bad as that," declared Dick, when she returned with the water and found him sitting unconcerned in the chair so suddenly and unexpectedly vacated. "Besides, what does the Good Book say? 'The young may die and the old must die.' The main thing is that you and I are alive, and life we must enjoy while we have it," and he gave her another suggestive look.

Emily bathed the old man's face and put her ear to his chest, her own heart throbbing so wildly that she could scarcely discern the faint beating of the other.

She then hurried to the kitchen and returned with a bottle of camphor and a towel. "Never mind, Red-bird. If he lives he lives and if he doesn't he doesn't. He's not your dad, anyway," and he caught the girl as she was passing him, drew her suddenly down upon his knee, and before she could realize his purpose kissed her full upon the mouth.

With a supple spring she freed herself from his arm, snapped the cork out of the camphor bottle, poured some of it into her hand and flung it into his face.

"Oh, you devil," he yelled, as the camphor reached his eyeballs. "You'll rue that trick. Now I *won't* spare you," and he made a